

Altoona Car Shops, Foreman's Office and Stores  
201 Chestnut Avenue  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-230-B

HAER  
PA,  
7-ALTO,  
2-B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ALTOONA CAR SHOPS, FOREMAN'S OFFICE AND STORES

HAER No. PA-230-B

Location: 201 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Altoona, Pennsylvania (1:24000)

UTM: 17 E.720900 N.4488950

Date of Construction: 1871, 1906

Builder: Pennsylvania Railroad  
William H. Brown, architect

Present Owner: Home Nursing Agency

Present Use: Health care

Significance: The central portion of the building may date to the establishment of the car shops in 1869.

Project Information: This project was undertaken in 1987 by HAER in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project as part of an architectural survey covering a nine-county region in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Randall Cooley, Director. See HAER No. PA-108, Pennsylvania Railroad, Altoona Works, Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania for further project information and documentation.

Compiler: Peter Stott, Historian  
Gray Fitzsimons, Editor

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### History:

The central portion of this two-story, hipped-roofed office and storehouse may date to the establishment of the car shops in 1869. A small office and storehouse (80' x 40') was completed in early 1871, according to the company's annual report; and James Dredge, in his 1879 account, shows a building of approximately this size, with a bell tower on the southern end. Dredge wrote that the space was evenly divided between offices and storage. "The offices are entirely for the use of the general foreman and the miscellaneous clerks belonging to the establishment." By 1888 the single-story building had been extended to the north (for a total length of 140'). Charles Clark's *Altoona Illustrated* (1896) includes an early photograph of the building as a single-story structure of eight bays, with a hipped-roof and a three-story, Italianate bell tower. Each bay was highlighted by slightly ornamented brick pilasters. By 1909 a number of major alterations had been made, including the addition of a second story, and the removal of the bell tower, and the extension of the building by 173'.

The irregular window pattern of the 11-bay street facade denotes the early utilization of storage and office space within the building. The storage areas had a single window, and the office space had a pair of windows. From north to south, the pattern of paired and single windows runs: 2-1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-2-2. The fourth bay from the south displays a broad round-arched, recessed entrance, below a pair of office windows.

Between 1870 and 1911 only three men occupied the position of general foreman of the car shops: Colonel John Piper, Mr. Levan, and W.F. Eberle. Eberle, General Foreman beginning in 1904, may have been responsible for the enlargement of the office about 1906. The building remained part of the PRR Car Shops until the mid-1960s, when Altoona Enterprises purchased the building from the railroad. Stanley Electric occupied the building from 1968 until the firm filed for bankruptcy in 1976. The Stanley property was sold at auction to Lumax Industries, which leased, and then sold, the building to the Home Nursing Agency, in 1986.

### Sources:

- Clark, Charles B., ed. Altoona Illustrated: A Complete Pen-Picture of the City of Altoona, Pennsylvania at the Close of the Year 1896 (Altoona: Board of Trade, 1896), p. 53.
- Dredge, James. The Pennsylvania Railroad, its Organization, Construction, and Management (London: office of Engineering, 1879), pp. 94-95.
- Ewing, James H. and Step, Harry. History of the City of Altoona and Blair County, including Sketches of the Shops of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company (Altoona, 1880).
- Pennsylvania Railroad Company. 24th Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company (2/21/1871), p. 60.
- Sanborn Map Company. Fire Insurance Maps of Altoona, Pennsylvania: 1888, 1894, 1909.
- Sell, Jesse C. Twentieth Century History of Altoona and Blair County, Pennsylvania and Representative Citizens (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., 1911), pp. 333-334.